EDITORIAL SECTION

LITERATURE · SCIENCE · ART · DRAMA

Arthur McEwen Is Inspired by "The Turtle."

AN EASY WAY TO PURIFY THE NEW YORK STAGE.

Bunch Aff Indecent Plays in One Theatre.

"THE TURTLE" is a gross disappointment to the moralist who, having read about it, goes prepared to be shocked.

He is shocked, certainly, but not within a hundred volts of what he might be were not a thousand opportunities for scandalizing him thoughtfully sacrificed by the management.

It would make a Frenchman weep to see New York's "Turtle." The French have no morals of our kind, which we use mainly to annoy ourselves where the drama is concerned, like the proper grown up nasty little boys and girls that we are.

The Frenchman not only is without morals, but is glad of it. So he makes turtles with his pen, lets them range freely over his stage and laughs at them till he aches. But he takes the precaution to lock his young women up. Unmarried girls don't go to see "The Turtle" in France—not if they would be thought as respectable as the young ladies who see "The Turtle" in New York undoubtedly are.

Without morals for himself, the Frenchman keeps a large supply of them on hand for female consumption, the wretch! In which the immoral Frenchman, strange to say, is very like our moral selves.

Not being a dramatic critic, and therefore having no responsibility for the souls of the people who have the theater-going habit, I'm free to say that when I saw "The Turtle" the other night my heart went out to the manager and the actors. They presented an indecent thing with a decency which proved their entire consciousness of its indecency—a degree of intelligence and sensitiveness denied the smiling, sniggering, roaring an applauding audience.

And half the audience was made up of women, most of them young and unmarried, and many mere girls. Where do these unashamed Eves come from? Where are they grown? Is modesty the unplucked forbidden fruit on the star tree of their Eden? They were well dressed, too, and knew enough to take their hats off, and no doubt went to the restaurant after the theater and cackled coyly of "The Turtle" to their arch and rallying escorts.

Mr. Comstock has not interferred with "The Turtle," but if he has beheld it he must have gone into executive session and communed with himself. Before he acts in this or like cases Mr. Comstock should take into consideration some things which he and his kind are prone to overlook. The fault is not all with the theaters by a good deal.

Manager Brady, for example. He is a man. He has associated all his life with prizefighters who, whatever their faults, are masculine. There is no masculinity in the taste which demands and pays for indecency on the stage.

Manager Brady, being a man and a sport, does not, I venture to think, like to stage Turtles. Why does he do it then? For strictly business reasons—the same as induce other business men to mix coffee with chicory and whiskey with syrup. The public likes adulteration.

Miss Martinot can't enjoy undressing on the stage or doing the other things that bring success to the piece and her salary to her. The actors, surely, are not proud of playing at being Frenchmen. I distinctly saw Mr. Kennedy blush.

In brief, "The Turtle" is on the New York stage because it pays to put it there.

That is not a justification, but an explanation.

Should the public be allowed to get what it wants always?

Certainly not. Let the public have its way and "The Turtle" would presently become, by comparison with other immediately forthcoming plays, a chaste entertainment.

The public needs Mr. Comstock's attention. It is wicked in itself and the cause of wickedness in managers.

This also is an explanation and not a justification for Mr. Brady.

But where shall the line be drawn and who shall draw it?

In searching for the answer let Mr. Comstock be scientific. Let him avoid the a priori assumptions of the innate moralist and interrogate facts for wisdom that shall yield practicable rules of action.

Let him study this public that likes "The Turtle" and pays the stage to debauch itself till people of delicacy would as soon spend an evening in the company of roystering outcasts as to attend any one of half a dozen theatres in the town. The Tenderloin has overflowed into the playhouses and they echo with the jests and shouts of the Mohawks and suggest the social life and midnight amusements of Will Honeyman in Mr. Addison's "Spectator."

But it is an error to suppose that it is the Tenderloin that asks for and makes profitable the Tenderloin drama. The Tenderloin being in possession of the substance naturally doesn't hanker much for the shadow. Men of free lives are often men of clean tastes in directions to which self-indulgence and fun do not invite. They don't care to see the chorus caroling, being personally acquainted with the houris who fascinate the very young and very old gentlemen in the auditorium. Vice has no glamour for the rounder, and he will show disgust for things on the stage that men of better lives guffaw at—and apparently decent women, too. The Tenderloin knows all about the Tenderloin and would rather see something besides itself on the boards.

But the country merchant out for a time, the poor clerk, the pimply youth, the curious girl, the fagged middle-aged woman—to all these the Tenderloin is the devil's fairyland. Men and women without the means or the bad courage to be of wicked behavior, the believing soul from Nantucket and New Jersey who credits what he reads of metropolitan gayety and wants a glimpse of it—these buy tickets for "The Turtle" and contribute largely toward insuring the reign of tights and undressed, depressing dirt.

WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HAVE IN STORE FOR US.

How shall managers be saved from the public and the public from itself and the managers?

Those who have been fed on Turtle in all its theatrical forms may go their way, male and female, as God made them. But the young are here and the theatres open for their corruption—paid to keep open by their elders and themselves. The young are worth saving from pollution, especially the half of them who are to be the mothers of their successors.

With the exception of Mr. Comstock and Dr. Parkhurst and Colonel Roosevelt few of really anything more substantial than moral sentiments to go upon. These sentiments, though good for conversational and literary purposes, seldom serve have anything more substantial than moral sentiments to go upon. These sentiments, though good for conversational and literary purposes, seldom serve to keep us out of mischief when the time comes. Nevertheless they inspire us with a great and genuine solicitude for the well-being of the ladies. Like the Frenchman who has no morals himself, we are anxious that the girls reserved for wives shall be guarded from evil knowledge—that they shall be kept from finding the world out as long as possible.

Man is marvellously virtious by proxy. He is more modest for woman than she is for herself—much more.

And he is to be honored for that, not sneered at—by the cynic. The flower of purity grows amid the weeds of masculine conduct. That is the moral distinction between man and the gorilla.

The stage is befouled by the public and the young are befouled by the stage. Custom ends by sanctioning all things. Note the decollete gown. Girls brought up on the theatre, as we have it, may be rendered secure by induration, but a delicate complexion is to be preferred to a toughened hide. The young man doesn't matter so much. He can take his chances and be fumigated and repaired and be nearly as good as new for all practical business, political, social and domestic purposes. But it is not to be wished that even he should marry the kind of girl who is habituated to the Turtle drama.

Prohibition being a failure in pink tights and peignoir, what's the matter with high license or its equivalent?

I propose a theatre for the production of the bawdy drama, and nothing else, and its rigid exclusion from all the other New York playhouses.

The freedom of the stage is as sacred as the freedom of the press, but the police power is a living and necessary fact.

If Mr. Comstock will stop advertising objectionable literature by his protests and turn in with his reforming broom, not to sweep the stage clean, but to get the dirt all into one heap, he will have a mighty power behind him—the power of that part of the public who know what is right, even if they don't find it agreeable to do right. That is to say, the average man who is a man will back Mr. Comstock's play. Mr. Brady, who gives "The Turtle," and Mr. Frohman, who gave "The Conquerors," and Mr. Jack, who makes a specialty of the world as it was before the Fall, and all the managers who are regularly or occasionally in the ancient business of the pander for business reasons, would doubtless willingly join the movement for their own and the theatre's emancipation from degradation. If not, they should be forced.

Policemen would not be needed at the doors of the St. Anthony to notify intending ticket buyers of the character of the house. Its fame would be so world-wide that the remotest recesses of the provinces, and even the homes of middle-class New York, would be penetrated.

Not one of the tens of thousands of reputable women who now are permitted by custom to enter any theatre to see any play would dare to be seen at the St. Anthony.

No young man would dare to be guilty of the audacious indecency of taking a decent girl there.

The St. Anthony would be a house for men only, and for such women as are past minding what is thought of them.

But the profits?

Is it in reason to ask managers to forego their present gains from plays that may be seen openly and written about guardedly, but may not be talked of in mixed company?

That should not be required of them, human and managerial nature being what it is.

The St. Anthony could be a co-operative enterprise, a captialized and stocked concern, each manager being permitted to buy shares in proportion to his record of offenses against morals and decorum.

If Mr. Brady, or Mr. Jack, or Mr. Frohman should find it necessary to close the doors of his existing theater for want of patronage, the St. Anthony Company for the Localization of Dramatic Foulness could apply trust principles and subsidize him to keep his works idle rather than compete.

Leading citizens possessing large accumulations of wealth, and repenting toward the end, would leave bequests to the St. Anthony. Were seasons of financial stringency encountered—which is unthinkable—liberal clergymen would preach St. Anthony sermons and take up collections for its preservation, since they would perceive the superiority of its moral claims over those of the heathen, who have no theaters to rot their minds and deprave their souls. Newspapers would raise funds in case of need to bribe managers to stay in the St. Anthony Trust. The pleasure of being able to go to the theatre without hazarding the chance of being introduced, with the ladies of your party, to the wit and pastimes of the inner Tenderloin would more than compensate for the occasional check sent to the editor for the restive managers.

What does Mr. Comstock think of the suggestion? And Dr. Parkhurst? And Colonel Roosevelt?

And if it does not approve itself to the judgment of these enlightened and unprejudiced guardians of the morals of the metropolis, what do the people of the metropolis themselves think of it?

The authorities have full power to act.

A police raid or two on a few of the fashionable houses, with the running in and hailing out of the managers and actors, would commend the St. Anthony idea mightily to the profession.

As for the Turtle-liking public slow years and want of opportunity will be needed for its education to a mental plane on which vileness will appear vile.

Perhaps the running in of the audiences as well as of the catering managers and actors would have an awakening effect.

After "The Turtle" what?

Either "The Turtle" without its shell or the St. Anthony, I should say, and as a white man I'm for the St. Anthony. ARTHUR M'EWEN.

THIS NOVEL HAS A DOG FOR HERO.

By Alfred Ollivant.

"BOB: SON OF BATTLE," is the title of a new novel just published by the Doubleday & McClure Company.

It is the maiden effort of a young English author named Alfred Ollivant. There is an old saying that an author's writing improves with time.

If this be true, there has arisen in the person of Mr. Ollivant a worthy compeer of that school of writers at the head of which stands Hall Caine.

Although not so fanciful as either Caine or Ian MacLaren, he is quite as forceful as either.

The scene of the book is laid among the simple, hardworking shepherds in the extreme north of England—shepherds whose lives are interwoven with the lives of their dogs and flocks.

It is a country in which sheep are paramount, and every other Dalesman is engaged in that profession which is as old as Abel.

It was here that the business of life began for that great dog about which the story is woven—Bob, Son of Battle, last of the Gray Dogs of Kenmuir.

And Bob is the hero of the story. He is owned by a Dalesman named James Moore, a most worthy shepherd, with a little daughter, Maggie, about whom is centred the love interest of the story.

If Bob is the hero, no less is "Red Wull" (Will) the canine villain. He is owned by a fiery little Scot named McAdam. This little man has an abused and motherless son, Davie, who consistently runs away from home to seek refuge with the Moores of Kenmuir, with whom his father is at deadly enmity.

In later years Davie falls naturally in love with Maggie, but this is a side issue. The chief interest of the story lies in the deadly feud between McAdam and Moore, the no less deadly rivalry of their dogs and the slow development of their characters.

McAdam allowed loose reign to his bitter animosity against James Moore. Little David was the only link between the two farms. Despite his father's angry command, the boy clung to his intimacy with the Moores with a doggedness that no thrashing could overcome.

"In time Red Wull, or the Tailless Tyke, as he was known to the Dalesmen, grew into an immense dog, heavy of muscle and huge of bone.

"A great bull head; undershot jaw, square and lengthy and terrible; vicious, yellow-gleaming eyes, cropped ears, and an expression incomparably savage. His coat was a tawny, lion-like yellow, short, harsh, dense; and his back, running up from shoulder to loins, ended abruptly in the knob-like tail. He looked like the devil of a dogs' hell. And his reputation was as bad as it looked. He never attacked unprovoked; but a challenge was never ignored, and he was greedy of insults."

Time passed and there came into the Dale flocks a "sheep killer"—a mysterious dog that committed nightly murder for the mere sake of blood. There was not a farm in the countryside that was not ravaged.

Each murder was set down to the same agency. Each was stamped with the same sign-manual. The Dalesmen raged and swore vengeance. The finger of suspicion pointed to Red Wull, but there was no proof.

To all the plain spoken suspicions McAdam would only point to Owd Bob, the dog of his enemy. He drank harder and swore louder than ever.

For a year or more Owd Bob had guarded his master's flock day and night. The Black Killer had no opportunity for his game of murder at Kenmuir, and Owd Bob had no opportunity to face the murderer.

It so happened that Moore and his son Andrew, passing over a rough mountain tract one night, came upon the dead body of a sheep with the great dog Red Wull lapping its life blood.

McAdam, too, who had never given over his belief in the guilt of Owd Bob, appeared on the scene. He saw his own dog with bloody muzzle standing over his quarry.

The huge brute came crawling toward him on his belly, whimpering as he came, very pitiful in his distress. He knew his fate as every sheep dog knows it. That troubled him not. His pain, insufferable, was that this, his friend and father, who had trusted him, should have found him in his sin.

So he crept up to his master's feet, and the little man never moved.

"Wullie—ma Wullie!" he said very gently. "They've aye bin agin me—and noo you! A man's mither—a man's wife—a man's dog! they're all I've iver had; and noo ain o' they three has turned agin me! Indeed I am alone!"

At that the great dog raised himself, and placing his forepaws on his master's chest tenderly, lest he should hurt him who was already hurt past healing, stood towering above him; while the little man laid his two cold hands on the dog's shoulders.

So they stood, looking at one another, like a man and his love.

And Moore, whom McAdam regarded with such deadly enmity, never told the tale.

On the following day Red Wull met his fate, dying like the courageous gladiator he was, under the teeth of a dozen dogs whipped by him at various times.

They set upon him as if by common consent. There was Grip and Grappler, Rasper Lassie, Shep, Amazon, Venus and half a dozen others.

"And he saw them coming, knew their errand—as who should better than the Terror of the Border?—and was glad. Death it might be, and such a one as he would wish to die—at least distraction from that long-drawn, haunting pain. And he smiled grimly as he looked at the approaching crowd, and saw there was not one there but he had humbled in his time.

He ceased his restless pacing, and awaited his doom; his great head was high as he scanned them furiously, daring them to come on.

And he remained stock-still, nor looked at them. His great chin was cocked, and his muzzle wrinkled in a dreadful grin. As he stood there, shivering a little, his eyes rolling back, his breath grating in his throat to set every bristle on end, he looked a devil indeed.

Long odds! But what cared he? The long-drawn agony of the night was drowned in that glorious delirium. The hate of years came bubbling forth. In that supreme moment he would avenge his wrongs. And he went in to fight, revelling like a giant in the red lust of killing.

Up and down the slope the dary mass tossed, like some hulk the sport of the waves. Black and white, sable and gray, worrying at that great centrepiece. Up and down, roaming wide, leaving everywhere a trail of red.

"Wullie, ma Wullie," screamed McAdam, bounding down the slope a crook's length in front of the rest. "Wullie! Wullie! to me!"

At the shrill cry the huddle below was convulsed. It heaved and swayed and dragged to and fro, like the sea lashed into life by some dying leviathan.

A gigantic figure, tawny and red, fought its way to the surface. A great tossing head, bloody past recognition, flung out from the ruck. One quick glance he shot from his ragged eyes at the little flying form in front; then with a roar like a waterfall plunged toward it, shaking off the bloody leeches as he went.

"Wullie! Wullie! I'm wi' ye!" cried that little voice, now so near.

Through—through—through!—an incomparable effort and his last. They hung to his throat, they clung to his muzzle, they were round and about him. And down he went again with a sob and a little suffocating cry, shooting up at his master one quick, beseeching glance as the sea of blood closed over him—worrying, smothering, tearing, like foxhounds at the kill.

They left the dead and pulled away the living. And it was no light task, for the pack were mad for blood.

At the bottom of the wet mess of hair Wullie lay dead, and the little man was left alone with the body of his last friend.

Dry-eyed he sat there, nursing the dead dog's head, hour after hour—alone—crooning to himself.

In the Devil's Bowl, next day, they found the pair, Adam McAdam and his Red Wull, face to face; dead, not divided; each, save for the other, alone. The dog, his saturnine expression glazed and ghastly in the fixedness of death, propped up against that humpbacked howder beneath which, a while before, the Black Killer had dreed his weird; and, close by, his master lying on his back, his dim dead eyes staring up at the heavens, one hand still clasping a crumpled photograph; the weary body at rest at last, the mocking face—mocking no longer—alight with a whole-souled, transfiguring happiness.

WHAT WOMAN'S DEVOTION MEANS.

By Winifred Black.

ELI SHAW, of Camden, New Jersey, is on trial for a hideous double murder.

Maybelle Nielson, his sweetheart, is devoting her whole existence to a desperate fight for his acquittal.

Against the counsel of her friends, in the face of overwhelming evidence of the man's guilt, in spite of every discouragement the human spirit can endure and live on, the brave little creature is battling night and day to save the life of the man she loves.

No one can read of her desperate devotion without a clutch at the heartstrings. It is the beautiful old story over again, the story of self-sacrifice and steadfast, tender loyalty, that make life something besides a fierce fight for meat and drink and shelter.

The papers are all drawing morals from this modern romance. They say the usual things about women in our hours of ease—and they go on to declare that it must be that a man who is capable of inspiring such devotion is a good man.

Now in that declaration the moral ceases to be. For the declaration is not true.

It ought to be, but it is not.

Women do not sacrifice life and youth and hopes and happiness for good men.

If Bill Sikes had been a decent sort of fellow, with a temporary weakness for other people's property, Nancy would have had conscientious scruples, and turned queen's evidence.

I was talking of the Dreyfus case with a celebrated criminal lawyer the other day.

He said: "In all this whole affair, there is just one thing which makes me think Dreyfus may be guilty."

"What's that?" said I.

"His wife's devotion," said the celebrated criminal lawyer. "Women love a rogue so much better than they do an honest man."

If what the lawyer said about a rogue is true, it is because a rogue is always in trouble, and she can have a chance to feel sorry for him and to reform him.

It is the mother instinct.

The happiest time in a woman's life is where the man she loves is ill, she can bos him and take care of him, and treat him like a cross little baby.

The honest man, the decent man, doesn't need coddling, and he will not stand it.

The rogue, the thief with the officer at his heels, the undetected scoundrel who dreads discovery, the moral invalid, the mental weakling—these are the men for whom women make heroic sacrifices.

A woman never really loves a man until she has martyred herself some way for him.

The English gentleman [illegible] says that

'A woman, a dog a[illegible]nut tree—

The more you beat [illegible]tter they be,"

said something which [illegible] an unpalatable grain of truth that ma[illegible]

If the man doesn't b[illegible] woman, he can beat a dog, and get the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals after him, and then the woman will like him, because no one else does, and she cat "stand by him" as he will be sure to call her extremely offensive of partisanship and be happy.

A woman is always trying to do something for a man which will make it impossible for him to forget her. She has a vague uneasy instinct which tells her that men forget rather easily, and she is forever racking her brains for some way to somehow so enchain the wandering fancy of the man she loves, that she will be to him what the mother is to the child—the one source of happiness in the world.

It is always a comparatively good woman who shows this devotion.

The sort of woman for whom a man commits crime gets rid of him the moment he is found out, but men do not commit crimes for good women.

The rule works both ways.

There is always a Delilah for every Samson.

If Delilah had really loved Sampson, she could have begged till she grew old, and she would not have had one tiny little lock of hair to tie up with a blue ribbon.

If Samson had been a cruelly indifferent animal who didn't care one penny for Delilah or her doings, she would have defended him against a whole camp full of Philistines, and she would have been perfectly happy to die of wounds contracted in his defence.

The French police have a saying for the guidance of men new in the arts of tracing crime and criminals,

"The better the man—the worse the woman—

The worse the woman—the better the man."

We in America do not like this brochetting of women and criminals, but there is a certain degree of truth in the cynical police view of the case after all.

Great-hearted, honest Charles Van Alstine has gone to London to look for the wife who stole all his money and ran away from him.

He met her on a steamer coming down from the Klondike. It was a case of love at first sight, and now Mr. Van Alstine is taking the consequences.

"Of course," says everybody.

Why of course?

Why shouldn't the great, simple, kindly jurist have fallen in love with an honest woman and made her happy.

Why should the mercenary, thievish-hearted creature whom he married, attract him?

For the same reason that has made her a fugitive from righteous punishment, for the sake of some heartless scoundrel who will desert her the moment her money is gone.

Charles Van Alstine is a good man—therefore he is a little ridiculous.

Women do not like funny men.

A rogue is never absurd.

A murderer has about him little that inclines even the most flippant onlooker to the laughter which is to the average woman undeniably a little disturbing. Women do not like to laugh, they like to cry.

It is a good thing.

They have plenty of it to do.

This poor little faithful, devoted girl over in Camden, is simply a type of the eternal motherhood of womankind.

She loves the man whose life she is trying to save, not in spite of his being in trouble, but because he is in trouble.

Many a woman idolizes her babies when they are small and weak and dependent, and grows comparatively indifferent to them as they wax strong and independent.

She believes in him not in spite of other people's unbelief, but because of other people's unbelief.

The more friendless he is, the more devoted will she be.

The more hideous the crime of which he stands accused, the more will she cling to him, and believe in him, and defend him, and love him, as has been the way of woman, ever since the Garden of Eden. And if he is acquitted, and comes out of prison, which seems an almost impossible termination of the affair, he will think as the writers in the papers do—there must be something wonderful about a man who inspires such devotion.

Wonderful!

The strange, inexplicable, illogical, foolish, courageous, devoted heart of a loving woman—that is the wonder—and will be until the end of time! WINIFRED BLACK.